Vol. VIII. Numb. 43

THE OBSERVATOR.

Players expell'd from Taunton *and* Exeter, *a good Preſident for the Juſtices of Peace to do the like at* Hampſtead *and* Greenwich. *'Tis unreaſonable they ſhould be ſuffer'd to act in this Time of common Calamity by War, and a threatening Seaſon, which calls for a general Faſt and Humiliation The Stage formerly condemn'd by our Church and State.*

From Saturday, June 25. to Wednesday, June 29. 1709.

Country-m. I Have a new Subject for you, Maſter. I ſaw a Letter t'other Day from *Taunton*, with an Account, that ſome Time ago, thirty ſtroling Players, Men and Women, came thither, and would have bargain'd for the Houſe where the Aſſizes are kept there, but the Price being too high, they procur'd the Church-houſe, and publiſh'd their Bills, calling themſelves the Servants of a certain Duke, and inviting People to their Plays; but ſome Miniſters of the Town taking Occaſion in their Sermons for ſeveral Lords Days ſucceſſively, to warn the People of the Danger of thoſe lewd Diverſions, the Players found themſelves diſappointed, and had the Mortification to hear their Practices expos'd in the Pulpit; upon which, they wrote to the Miniſters, ſent them a Knave of Cards in their Letters, and invited them to come to the Play-houſe, where they ſhould have the beſt Places, and hear a Prologue in Defence of the Stage; but the Miniſters perſiſting in their Duty, the Players, tho' encourag'd by the Soldiers then in the Town, and others, became ſo contemptible, that the very Children hiſs'd them in the Streets; which oblig'd them to pack up their Awls, and away they went to *Exeter*, where they deſign'd to have open'd their Shop, but the honeſt Mayor of that City ſent them Word to be gone, or he would give them the Laſh.

Obſ. I am very glad to hear it, *Roger*; the Mayor was impower'd to do ſo by the Statute. I hope the Juſtices about *Hampſtead* and *Greenwich* will follow that laudable Example. Would our Magiſtrates and Miniſters ſhew the like Zeal every where, and diſperſe among the People ſuch ſhort and pertinent Diſcourſes about the Danger of going to Plays, as the Conſiderations I mention'd before, thoſe Synagogues of Satan, as *Chryſoſtome*, and others of the Fathers, call'd 'em, would ſoon be baniſh'd the Nation.

Country-m. I confeſs, Maſter, I am extreamly ſcandaliz'd, that at ſuch a Juncture as this, when Providence ſeems to call for publick and national Humiliations and Faſts, and we find the ſame to be practis'd by our Fellow-Subjects in *Scotland*, the Diſſenters here, our Allies in *Holland*, and our Enemies in *France*, that ſuch national Abominations ſhould be countenanc'd here in *England*, and the Stage, after it has infected *London*, the Centre of the Nation, ſhould be now ſet up to ſpread the Contagion thro' all the Corners of the Country. They have made their Attempts in the *Weſt* without Succeſs, and ſhall they be entertain'd in the *Eaſt*? Shall *Somerſetſhire* and *Devonſhire* out-do *Middleſex* and *Kent* in Point of Chriſtianity and Reformation? Shall *Briſtol*, *Exeter*, and *Taunton* riſe in Judgment againſt *London*, *Hampſtead*, and *Greenwich*?

Obſ. Not ſo paſſionate, *Roger*; let not your Zeal out-run your Judgment! Has not *London* ſuppreſs'd the Abuſes of *Bartholomew*-Fair, which was the greateſt Rendezvous of Debauchees in the Nation? Is not the Play-houſe within the Precinct of the City now pull'd down, to be converted into a Timber-yard? Have not the Juſtices of *Middleſex*, with her Majeſty's gracious Concurrence, ſuppreſs'd the ſcandalous Riots of *May*-Fair? Are not *Green-Gooſe*-Fair, *Hampſtead*-Fair, and other Rendezvouſes of Debauchery, put down? Is not the building of Muſick-Booths in *Southwark*-Fair diſcharg'd? And is not there an Interdict at preſent upon acting Plays in the City and Liberties of *Weſtminſter*, by thoſe call'd her Majeſty's Servants; and whereas you talk of publick and national Faſts? Are there not particular Prayers appointed by our Church, ſuited to the publick Occaſions?

Country-m. Yes, Maſter, I thankfully own it, and heartily pray for the Bleſſing of God upon her Majeſty, our inferior Magiſtrates, and thoſe other worthy Perſons, who have contributed to thoſe good Steps towards a publick Reformation; but give me Leave, without being cenſur'd as a canting Fellow, to quote a Text of Scripture or two. *Saul* thought he had fully executed God's Command againſt *Amaleck*, but *Samuel* then convicted him of the contrary for all his Confidence, by putting this plain Queſtion to him, *What meaneth then this Bleating of the Sheep in mine Ears, and the Lowing of the Oxen which I hear?* 'Tis thought fit, that thoſe call'd her Majeſty's Servants, ſhall forbear acting their Plays in the City, why then ſhould thoſe who call themſelves the Servants of this or that Duke, act them in the Country? Is not the Bleating of thoſe Sheep, I had almoſt ſaid Goats, and the Lowing of thoſe Oxen, or if you will, Bulls of *Baſhan*, ſtill heard in our Ears? Then as to thoſe particular Prayers ſuited by our Church to the publick Occaſions, I am as much pleas'd with their Gravity, Weight, and Pertinency, as you or any other Man whatever; but don't you think, there are ſolemn Occaſions, which call for ſolemn Faſts, or ſomething more publick than the ſtated Courſe of Devotions?

Obſ. Yes, I do, *Roger*; but ſhall be glad to hear your Thoughts upon that Head; for I a ways took thee to be a Man of Piety, as well as of a publick Spirit, if thoſe two Characters can juſtly be ſeparated.

Country-m. Then, Maſter, ſince you give me Leave, I will tell you what I obſerv'd in my ordinary Courſe of reading the Bible. 'The Prophet 'Joel liv'd in a Time when there were the Judg-'ments of War and Dearth, and threatening Sea-'ſons upon the Land, a Nation made War upon 'them, which was ſtrong, and without Number, 'whoſe Teeth were the Teeth of a Lyon, and who 'had the Cheek-Teeth of a great Lyon; the Seed 'was rotten under the Clod, the Garners were 'laid deſolate, the Barns were broken down, the 'Beaſts groan'd, and the Herds of the Cattel were 'perplex'd.

Obſ. I muſt own, *Roger*, that has a pretty near Reſemblance to our Caſe. But what then?

Country-m. What then, Maſter! 'The Prophet 'call'd aloud to his Country, and ſaid, Awake, 'ye Drunkards, and weep and howl all, ye Drin-'kers of Wine, becauſe of the new Wine, for it 'is cut off from your Mouth. Sanctify ye a Faſt, 'call a ſolemn Aſſembly, gather the Elders, and 'all the Inhabitants of the Land, into the Houſe 'of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord;

‘ gather the Children, and thoſe that ſuck the Breaſts ; ‘ let the Bridegroom go forth of his Chamber, and the ‘ Bride out of her Cloſet ; let the Prieſts, the Miniſters of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the ‘ Altar, and let them ſay, Spare thy People, O Lord, ‘ and give not thine Heritage to Reproach, that the ‘ Heathen ſhould rule over them ; wherefore ſhould they ‘ ſay among the People, where is their God ?

Obſ. Well, *Roger*, how do you make the Application ?

Country-m. Application, Maſter ! the Paſſage applies it ſelf. Do you think, that particular and congregational Devotions are enough, in a Time of national Judgments ? The Prophet in this Caſe, which you own reſembles ours, orders a Trumpet to be blown in *Zion*, to ſanctify a Faſt, and call a ſolemn Aſſembly, the very ſucking Infants were to bear a Part in the publick Humiliation ; and if the Bridegroom was to leave his Chamber, and the Bride her Cloſet, do you think the Prophet would have allow'd prophane Players to act publickly in all the Corners of the Kingdom ? Don't our Drinkers of Wine complain, that it is cut off from their Mouth ? Is not much of our Seed rotten under the Clods, and our Garners threaten'd to be laid waſte, as they are in other Places of *Europe* ? Have we not a Multitude of Poor of our own, and are we not, at the ſame Time, oblig'd to provide for the Poor of other Nations ? Don't our very Beaſts groan, and are not the Herds of our Cattel perplex'd ? Are we not at War with a Nation which is ſtrong, and without Number, whoſe Teeth are the Teeth of a Lyon, and who have the Cheek-Teeth of a great Lyon, that have laid waſte many Nations ?

Obſ. That's too plain, *Roger* ; but come to the Point. What do you aim at by all this Harrangue ?

Country-m. I aim at this, Maſter, that we ſhould have a general and a national Humiliation, as well as our fellow Subjects, our Allies, and our Enemies, becauſe the Prophet told the *Iſraelites*, if they did ſo, ‘ That ‘ then the Lord would be jealous for his Land, and pity ‘ his People ; he would ſend them Corn, Wine, and ‘ Oil, and no more make them a Reproach among the ‘ Heathen ; he would remove far from them the Army ‘ of their Enemies, and drive them into a Land barren ‘ and deſolate, and make their Stink and ill Savour ‘ come up, becauſe they had done great Things. Now, Maſter, this has been in part accompliſh'd for us againſt the *French* already ; but if we neglect God, he may juſtly be provok'd to turn the Courſe of Affairs againſt us. Therefore I hope there never will be Ground to ſay, that when all *Europe* is like a Ship in a Tempeſt, we only ſhall be aſleep, like *Jonah*, while every Body elſe is calling upon their Gods. Shall the *French* King, in his Diſtreſs, call upon his Gods of Wood, Silver, and Gold ; have Recourſe to Shrines, and the Interceſſion of Sinners, whom the Pope call Saints ; ſhall he pretend, that his Hope is in God alone, and upbraid us with relying on our Arms ; and ſhall not we nationally and ſolemnly call upon the Lord God of Hoſts, through the Interceſſion of the Holy Jeſus, who has ſo frequently bleſs'd our Armies with Victories ; while his Gods were aſleep, or gone on a long Journey, as *Elijah* upbraided *Baal*'s Prieſts, and neither did nor could ſhew any Regard to their ſlaſhing and cutting of themſelves, their Laſhes, Pennances, Vows, Pilgrimages, and Proceſſions ?

Obſ. Well, *Roger*, but you have made a Digreſſion from your Subject, and forgot the Players.

Country-m. Nay, Maſter, I have ſpoke as much as comes to my Share ; I want to hear what you have to ſay againſt them.

Obſ. I make no Scruple to ſay, *Roger*, that they ought never to have been ſuffer'd, but much leſs now in a Time of publick Calamity ; and I am ſorry that we, in this Age, have ſo much degenerated from our Anceſtors, as to give Countenance to ſuch a Set of vile Perſons, who have been condemn'd by the greateſt Lights in our Church, and declar'd Rogues by our State. The famous *Bradwardin*, Arch-biſhop of *Canterbury*, wrote againſt them in 1345, in his Book *de Cauſa Dei*, i. e. of the Cauſe of God. *Wiccliff*, the Morning-Star of our Reformation, did the like in 1380, in his Dialogues. Arch-biſhop *Parker*, ſoon after the Reformation, in his Book *de Antiquitate Eccleſiæ Britannicæ*, of the Antiquity of the *Britiſh* Church, aſſerted, that Stage-Plays were not to be ſuffer'd in any Chriſtian or well-govern'd Commonwealth. Dr. *George Alley*, Biſhop of *Exeter*, in his *Poor Man's Library*, printed by Queen *Elizabeth*'s Authority, wrote againſt Play-Books and Stage-Plays, as the Fomenters and Fewel of Luſt, the Occaſions of Adultery, and other intolerable Evils, and againſt other wanton and impure Books ; yet in this Age we are become ſo wicked, as to countenance and applaud Plays and Play-Books, and to print and diſperſe the late Earl of *Rocheſter*'s lewd and vile Poems, and other Pieces, and to make that the Subject of our Diverſion and Entertainment, which he made the Subject of his Averſion and Abhorrence on his Death-Bed. Biſhop *Babington* and Biſhop *Andrews*, in their Expoſitions of the ſeventh Commandment, Biſhop *Baily*, in his Preface to the *Practice of Piety*, and Biſhop *Hall*, in his Epiſtles, did all condemn Stage-Plays, as did a great many others of our moſt famous Divines ; and we all very well know what ſome of our beſt practical Divines have ſaid againſt them of late.

Country-m. But I want to hear what our State ſaid of them, Maſter ; for thoſe impudent Fellows deriſe Divines, ſend them Knaves of Cards by way of Reproach ; and at *Hampſtead*, as I am inform'd, in order to have a Laſh at a Miniſter there, who preach'd againſt them, they inſolently acted the *Spaniſh Fryar*.

Obſ. I ſhall give you a farther Account of that another Time, *Roger* ; but at preſent ſhall only tell you, that by the 3d of *Car.* 1. Cap. 4. the 39th of *Eliz.* is confirm'd ; by which Stage-Players were declar'd to be Rogues and Vagabonds, order'd to be ſent to the Houſe of Correction, to be impriſon'd, ſet on the Stocks and whipt ; and if they continue to play notwithſtanding, to be burnt with a hot Iron of the Breadth of an *Engliſh* Shilling, with a great Roman *R* in the left Shoulder, which ſhould there remain as a perpetual Mark of a Rogue ; and if they ſtill continu'd obſtinate, they were to be baniſh'd ; and if they return'd again, and continu'd incorrigible, they were to be executed as Felons ; which was an effectual Way to be rid of them. But more of this another Time, *Roger*.

Advertiſements.

This Day is publiſh'd,

☞ New Stenography ; or, Short-writing yet ſhorter, advanc'd in a far more compleat, ſhort, and ſwift Method, than any yet extant ; where the Practitioner or Learner needs not burthen his Memory with any Rules of writing by Sentences, or any inſignificant Rules of Contraction, as there are in other Authors. Done for the Benefit of thoſe that deſign to write Sermons, Tryals, Speeches, or any Manner of Diſcourſe. By John T. Sold by J. Marſhal at the Bible in Newgate-Street, and A. Bettesworth at the Red-Lyon on London-Bridge.

☞ The Royal Decoction, or a never-failing Diet-Drink againſt the Venereal Diſeaſe. Its wonderful Efficacy is ſuch, that any Patient may be thereby moſt effectually cur'd, be it of never ſo long ſtanding, and aggravated by ineffectual Salivations, and the Body be cover'd with Scabs, Ulcers, Blotches, and the Legs with Holes, all the Limbs with moſt excruciating Pains, the Palate eaten away, and the Noſe fallen in, &c. This Anti-venereal Decoction eaſes all the Venereal Pains in 8 Days, and in 30 Days perfects the whole Cure, and that without the Uſe of Mercury. The Gentleman, who alone prepares this Decoction, offers to enter into an Engagement, from 100 to 500 Pounds, for the Performance of what he promiſes, if any Patient, tho' diſcourag'd by other Practitioners, will come to his Houſe, he will furniſh them with Neceſſaries, as well as Phyſick, for 8 Days, and if by that time he is not ſatisfy'd that he may be perfectly cur'd, he is free to leave it, without paying any thing for Lodging, Diet, or Phyſick. The Taſte of this Decoction is ſo pleaſant, and the Operation ſo kind to Nature, that big-belly'd Women and Sucklings are daily cur'd with it at all the Seaſons of the Year. The Doctor or his Wife are to be ſpoken with at all ſeaſonable Hours, at the Hand and Urinal, over againſt little Turn-ſtile in high Holborn, (late the D. of Leeds's.) N.B. The Bill at large is to be ſeen hanging up in the Royal Exchange, London.

ANTIVENEREAL-PILLS, &c. which perfectly carry off the Infection of a Clap, or Running of the Reins, and compleat the Cure in a few Days Time, without any Hindrance of Buſineſs. They free the Body of the Remains of any ill-cur'd Pox or Clap, and of Mercury (unſkilfully given.) They are ſafe and pleaſant in their Operation, and may be depended on for an effectual, private, and ſpeedy Cure, even in the moſt ſtubborn and inveterate (curable) Pox, when attended with violent Aches, Pains, Night-pains, Ulcers, &c. as their Author can truly affirm from Experience, he having, as he believes, perform'd more eminent Cures in that Diſeaſe within theſe laſt ten Years of his Practice, than any other Phyſician or Surgeon in Great Britain has done in that Time. Theſe Pills are 3s. the Box ; and his other Medicines, which any particular Caſe may require, of moderate Prices. To be had at the Golden Ball in the dark Paſſage three Doors beyond the Sun Tavern in Honey-lane Market in Cheapſide. Where alſo may be had his Book call'd QUACKERY UNMASK'D, which is a rational and effectual Anſwer to the 6th Edition of Mr. Marten's Treatiſe concerning the Venereal Diſeaſe, its Appendix, and the charitable Surgeon. Price bound 1 s. 6 d.

LONDON, Printed by *H. Meere*, and ſold by *B. Bragge* in *Pater-Noſter-Row*. 1709.